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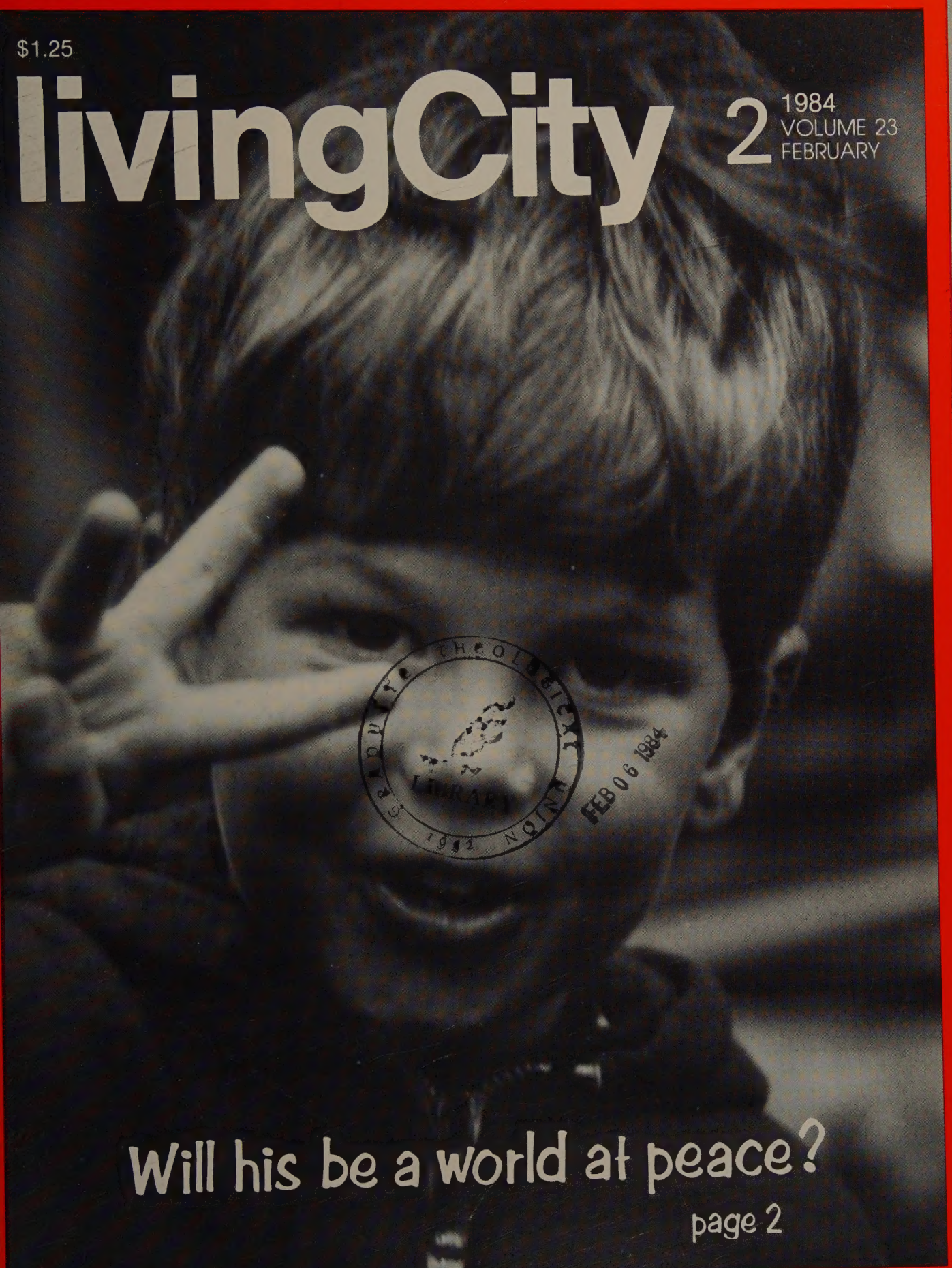

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Will his be a world at peace?

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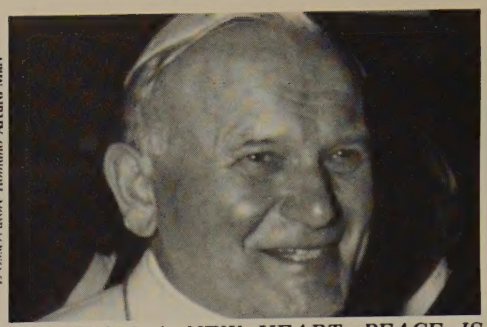

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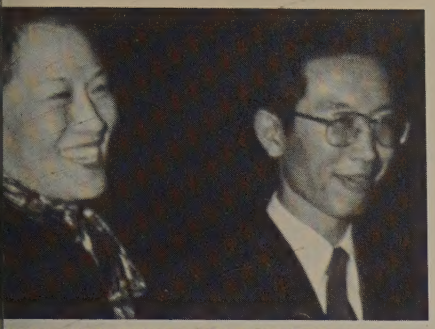

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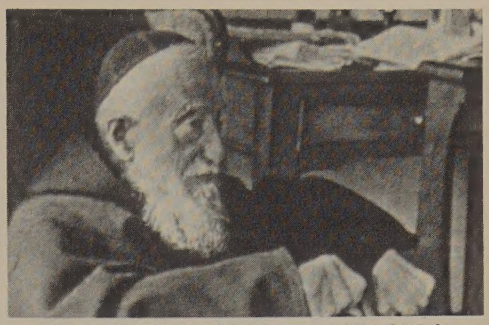

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"FROM A NEW HEART, PEACE IS BORN"

Excerpts from the Message of Pope John Paul II for the celebration of the World Day of Peace, January 1, 1984

To the political leaders of the nations,
To those active in economic, social and cultural life,
To the young, who hope for a world of fraternity and solidarity,
To all of you, men and women, who desire peace!

I address myself to you at the dawn of the year 1984 which presents itself everywhere full of questions and anxiety, but at the same time rich in hope and prospects. My appeal on the occasion of the 17th World Day of Peace springs from the depths of my heart, and I know that I re-echo the desire of many men and women who yearn for fraternity in a divided world. The message that I send to you is both simple and demanding, for it concerns each of you personally. It invites each one to do his or her share in the establishment of peace in the world without passing this duty on to others. The theme that I propose today for your consideration and action is this: 'From a new heart, peace is born.'

Today, one cannot help being struck by shadows and threats, but at the same time without forgetting the lights and hopes.

Truly, *peace is fragile*, and injustice abounds. Implacable wars are being waged in several countries; and they continue despite the accumulation of death, grief and ruin; and without any apparent progress towards a solution. Violence and fanatical terrorism do not spare other countries, and it is the innocent who too often pay the price, while passions increase and fear risks leading to all sorts of extremism. In many regions human rights are violated, freedom is mocked, people are imprisoned unjustly, summary executions are perpetrated for partisan reasons and, in this twentieth century which has seen a multiplication of Declarations and of courts of appeal, humanity is ill-informed or, if it is informed, it remains almost helpless to stop these abuses. Numerous countries are engaged in the painful struggle to overcome hunger, disease and underdevelopment, while the rich countries reinforce their position and the arms race continues to absorb unjustifiably resources that could be better used. The build-up of conventional, chemical, bateriological and, especially, nuclear weapons causes an oppressive threat to weigh upon the future of the nations, notably in Europe, and causes justifiable concern to their population. A new and grave uneasiness fills public opinion, and I understand it....

It is in the face of these enormous problems that I propose the theme of a renewal of "heart." It may be thought that the proposal is too simple and the means disproportionate. And yet, if one reflects well on it, the analysis outlines here permits us to go to the very depths of the problem and is capable of calling into question the presuppositions that preceisely constitute a threat to peace. Humanity's helplessness to resolve the existing tensions reveals that the obstacles, and likewise the hopes, come from something deeper than the systems themselves.

It is my deep conviction, it is the leitmotiv of the Bible and of Christian thought, and is, I hope, the intuition of many men and women of good will, that war has its origins in the human heart. It is man who kills and not his sword, or in our day, missiles....

If the present systems generated by the "heart" of man turn out to be incapable of ensuring peace, then it is the "heart" of man that must be renewed, in order to renew systems, institutions and methods. Christian faith has a word for this fundamental change of heart: it is 'conversion.' Speaking generally, it is a matter of rediscovering clearsightedness and impartiality with freedom of spirit, the sense of justice with respect for the rights of man, the sense of equity with global solidarity between the rich and the poor, mutual trust and fraternal love....

This transformation in depth of the spirit and the heart certainly calls for great courage, the courage of humility and clearmindedness. It must influence the collective mind, by first touching the conscience of the individual. Is this an im-

possible hope? The impotence and danger in which our contemporaries find themselves urge them not to put off this *return to the truth* which alone will make them free and capable of better systems. This is the first condition for creating the "new heart"....

I say again that peace is the duty of everyone. The *International Organizations* also have a large role to play in order to make universal solutions prevail, above partisan points of view. And my appeal is directed especially to all those who exercise through the media an influence on *public opinion*, all those who *are engaged in the education* of young people and adults: it is to them that is entrusted the formation of the spirit of peace. In society, can one not count especially on *the young*? In the face of the threatening future which they foresee, they certainly aspire more than others to peace, and many of them are prepared to devote their generosity and their energies to peace. Let them show inventiveness at its service, without abandoning clearsightedness, and so let them show the courage to weigh up all the aspects of long-term solutions! In short, everyone, all men and women, must contribute to peace, contributing their particular sensitivities and playing their particular roles. Thus *women*, who are intimately connected to the mystery of life, can do much to advance the spirit of peace, in their care to ensure the preservation of life and in their conviction that real love is the only power which can make the world liveable for everyone.

"Christians, disciples of Jesus, caught up in the tensions of our age, we must recall that there is no happiness except for the "peacemakers" (cf. Mt. 5:9).

The Catholic Church is celebrating the Holy Year of the Redemption: the whole Church is invited to allow herself to be taken over by the Savior who said to the people, as he went to the extreme of love: 'My peace I give you' (cf. Jn. 14:27). In her, all must share with their brothers and sisters the proclamation of salvation and the vigor of hope.

The Synod of Bishops on Reconciliation and Penance recently recalled the first words of Christ: "Repent, and believe in the Gospel" (Mk. 1:15). The message of the Synod Fathers shows us on which road we must go forward in order to be true peacemakers: "The Word calls us to repent. *'Change your heart*, it tells us, seek pardon, and *be reconciled with the Father'*. The plan of the Father for our society is that we live as one famly in justice, truth, freedom and love." This family will only be united in deep peace if we hear the call to return to the Father, to be reconciled with God himself.

Answering this call, cooperating with God's plan is to allow the Lord to convert us. Let us not count on our power alone, nor only on our so often failing will. Let us allow our lives to be transformed, for "all this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:18).

Let us rediscover the power of *prayer*: to pray is to be reconciled with him whom we invoke, whom we meet, who makes us live. To experience prayer is to accept the grace which changes us; the Spirit, united to our spirit, commits us to conform our life with the Word of God. To pray is to enter into the action of God upon history: he, the sovereign actor of history, has wished to make people his collaborators.

"Peace is the duty of everyone."

Two voices for peace

Guglielmo Boselli

Two courageous documents—the message of 14,000 physicists to the heads of state; the talk (which immediately followed this) of Pope John Paul II to the Pontifical Academy of Science.

The 14,000 physicists from 43 different countries all over the world had signed the now-famous proposed nuclear arms freeze. There has never been such a wide adherence to a message of peace from the world of science. Among those signing there were 33 Nobel Prize winners and many directors of major organizations and research institutes, from Japan (responsible for 4,000 of the signatures), US, Russia, England, Germany, Italy and France.

The Pope's talk contains a new proposal to scientists of every conviction: to refuse to collaborate for the construction of nuclear war heads, and to make a definite choice to use their scientific competence and intelligence solely for works of peace. It means advancing a "positive" vision of atomic peace (and not only atomic) which includes respect for the rights of the individual, of nations, the struggle against hunger, against poverty, against social and economic injustice the overcoming of barriers of mutual prejudice, negotiation as the only road to peace, as the Pope continues to repeat in his talks.

It is a long-term commitment but unless we have it very clear in front of our eyes, at least as a reference point, how can we ever reach a true and complete peace?

In the meantime, even the freeze on nuclear war heads called for by the 14,000 scientists in the name of the survival of humanity, and the Pope's proposal to scientists to actuate a conscientiuos objection regarding the building of devices of death, are already a first step in that direction.

Seventy-one scientists of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences gathered in Rome last November for a three-day symposium on the theme "Science at the Service of Peace." On November 13, 1983, Pope John Paul II addressed these members, for the most part non-Catholic, urging them to focus their research on life and peace. Below are brief excerpts from his talk.

According to Saint Bernard there five motives that lead human beings to study: "There are people who only wish to know for the sake of knowing: this is base curiosity. Others wish to know in order that they themselves may be known: this is shameful vanity, and such people cannot escape the mockery of the satyrical poet who said about their likes: 'For you, knowing is nothing unless someone else knows that you know.' Then there are those who acquire knowledge in order to resell it and, for example, to make money or gain honors from it: their motive is distasteful. But some wish to know in order to edify: this is charity. Others in order to be edified: this is wisdom. Only those who belong to these last two categories do not misuse knowledge, since they only seek to understand in order to do good."

Unarmed prophets have been the object of derision in every age,

---

Paul says to us about Christ: "For he is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility" (Eph. 2:14). We know what a great power of mercy transforms us in *the Sacrament of Reconciliation*. This gift overwhelms us. In that case, in all loyalty, we cannot remain resigned to the divisions and confrontations which set us against one another even though we share the same faith; we cannot accept, without reacting, the fact that conflicts are dragging on which are destroying the unity of humanity, which is called to become one single body. If we celebrate forgiveness, can we fight one another endlessly? Can we remain enemies while we invoke the same living God? If Christ's law of love is our law, shall we remain silent and inert while the wounded world looks to us to join the front ranks of those who are building peace?

Humble and conscious of our weakness, let us come to the *Eucharistic table*, where he who gives his life for the multitude of his brethren gives us a new heart, where he puts into us a new spirit (cf. Ezek. 36:26). In the depth of our poverty and disarray, through him let us give thanks, for he unites us by his presence and the gift of himself, he "who came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near" (Eph. 2:17). And if it is given to us to welcome him, it is up to us to be his witnesses through our fraternal work in all the workshops of peace.

Peace has many different forms. There is peace between nations, peace in society, peace between

especially on the part of shrewd politicians, the supporters of power. But today must not our civilization recognize that humanity has need of them? Should not they alone be heard by the whole of the world's scientific community, so that the laboratories and factories of death may give place to laboratories of life? The scientist can exercise his freedom to choose the field of his own research. When, in a particular historical situation, it is all but inevitable that a certain form of scientific research will be used for purposes of aggression, he must make a choice that will enable him to work for the good of people, for the building up of peace. By refusing certain fields of research, inevitably destined, in the concrete historical circumstances, for deadly purposes, the scientists of the whole world ought to be united in a common readiness to disarm science and to form a providential force for peace.

Truth, freedom, justice and love: such must be the cornerstones of the generous choice of a science that builds up peace. These four values, the cornerstones of science and of the life of civilized society, must be at the basis of that universal call of scientists, of the world of culture, of the citizens of the world, which the pontifical Academy of Sciences, with my full and convinced approval, desires to address to the world for the reconciliation of peoples, for the success of the only war that must be fought: the war against hunger, disease and the death of millions of human beings whose quality and dignity of life could be helped and promoted with seven per cent of the amount spent each year for the incessant and threatening rearmament of the richest nations.

Reprinted from the *Osservatore Romano* English Edition, November 21, 1983.

14,000 Physicists:

"Stop the Bomb!"

Here is the text of the document signed by 14,000 scientists from all over the world.

"We call for an agreement to halt the testing, production and deployment of nuclear weapons and nuclear weapon delivery systems. In the meanwhile no further nuclear weapons or delivery systems should be deployed anywhere.

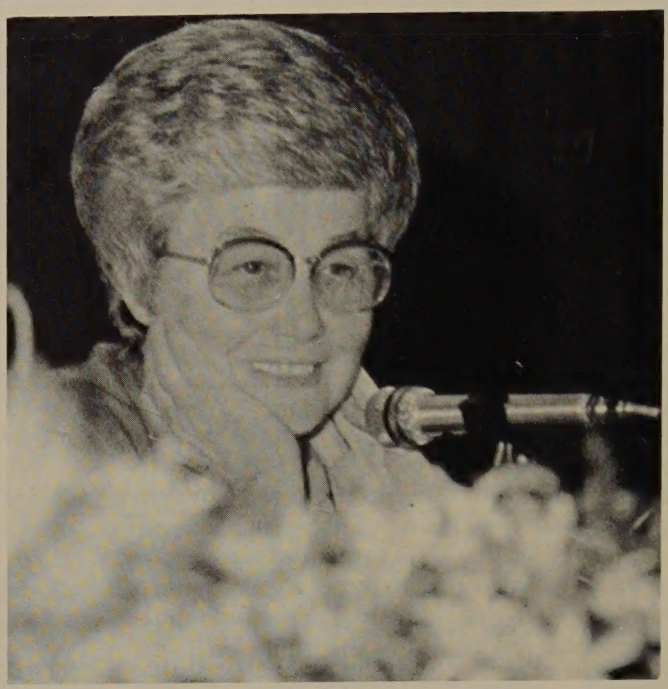
"There are now more than 50,000 nuclear devices, some of which are 1,000 times more powerful than the bomb which destroyed Hiroshima: equivalent to 3 tons of T.N.T. per inhabitant of the earth. The destiny of humanity is in our hands. The catastrophe of a nuclear war can and must be avoided. The nuclear arms race must be brought to a halt now; there is no time to lose. Let us unite our voices to ask for an immediate freeze in the arms race."

citizens, peace between religious communities, peace within undertakings, neighborhoods, villages and, especially, peace inside families. In addressing myself to Catholics, and also to other Christian brethren and to men and women of good will, I have deplored a certain number of obstacles to peace. They are grave, they present serious threats. But since they depend on the spirit, the will, the human "heart," with the help of God people can overcome them. They must refuse to give in to fatalism and discouragement.

Positive signs are already piercing the darkness. Humanity is becoming aware of the indispensable solidarity which links peoples and nations, for the solution of the majority of the great problems: employment, the use of terrestrial and cosmic resources, the advancement of less favored nations, and security. The reduction of arms, controlled and worldwide, is considered by many a vital necessity. There are many calls to use every means in order to banish war from the horizon of humanity. There are also many new appeals for dialogue, cooperation and reconciliation, and numerous fresh initiatives. The Pope is anxious to encourage them. "Blessed are the peacemakers!" Let us always unite clearsightedness with generosity! Let peace be more genuine and let it take root in man's very heart! Let the cry of the afflicted who await peace be heard! Let every individual commit all the energy of a renewed and fraternal heart to the building of peace throughout the universe!" □

January 1, 1984

CHIARA LUBICH ANSWERS



The following are a collection of answers from William Proctor's book "An Interview with Chiara Lubich" published by New City Press, New York, the publishing house of the Focolare Movement, and answers given by Chiara Lubich to various communities of the movement throughout the world.

Question: Do you feel that it's possible to live a genuinely joyful, relaxed and peaceful life, in terms of your inner life, in today's high-pressured urban environment?

Answer: Yes. And I would like to tell you how we find this joy and this inner peace while remaining in the midst of the world, with the noise of telephones, cars, TV, and all the usual clamor. But first, I would like to recount an episode which led us to the key for resolving this problem.

It was the beginning of our new life, and I had gone to visit a friend of mine who was sick. A priest who was there to give her the Eucharist asked me, "Do you know when it was that Jesus suffered the most?" And I answered, "Perhaps it was in the Garden of Olives." At that time, in fact, this was the common belief. The priest answered, "No, Jesus suffered the most when on the cross he cried out, 'My God, my God. why have you forsaken me?"

When the priest left the room, I turned to my sick friend and to whomever else was there with me and said: "If Jesus suffered the most in his abandonment, then we who want to follow him crucified should choose him as our Ideal in the moment when he cried, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' We have only one life; let's choose to live it for him!"

I said this because I had great faith in the priesthood: what came from the lips of a priest was taken by me as if it came from God.

From that moment on, all suffering— whether personal, or that of our brothers and sisters, our small community, the Church, or humanity— seemed to us an expression of his suffering, the suffering of Jesus forsaken.

In all the manifestations of suffering we beheld his countenance, especially in spiritual suffering. So when we experienced an inner sadness, for instance, or aridity, or a lack of peace, or the burden of our sins, or a sense of failure, we would find a deeper meaning for all these personal sufferings in his cry.

For, in the moment of his abandonment, Jesus was left in darkness. It seemed that he, who is the Truth, the Light of the world, could not see the Father anymore, the Father who had never abandoned him. In that moment he experienced the greatest possible aridity. He had lost the immense, divine joy of his union with the Father, and felt the burden of all our sins on his shoulders. He felt a failure; peace, tranquility, and joy were banished from his soul.

Thus, viewing our suffering as a participation in his, we would embrace him forsaken in that suffering. And we would say from the depths of our heart: "This is what I want, this is what I have chosen." Forgetting ourselves, we would plunge into this new adventure and wholeheartedly begin to do whatever was God's will for us in the following moment. And very often, almost always, the sense of aridity and of being without light, peace, and tranquility would disappear.

This is how we learned to overcome inner difficulties. But that is not all. We also saw the face of Jesus forsaken in the external circumstances that were an obstacle to the peace, joy, and tranquility of our souls. And so we would accept them and love them as an expression of Jesus—as Jesus. And in accepting and embracing them, we experienced the return of deep, supernatural peace and joy.

Question: I feel that when I pray, when I have meditation, when I love others, I don't do it in a way which is as deep as I would like it to be. How can I acquire a true, deep union with God?

Answer: An infallible method for attaining union with God is to embrace the cross, to love the cross. Jesus Crucified and Forsaken made himself nothing so that we could find the Father; and that is the union you are seeking. When we embrace Jesus Crucified and Forsaken, making ourselves one with him, we attain that union. Jesus Forsaken is the way, the key to union with God.

Another way to reach this union is to do the will of God. In our life we cannot do just anything; we must do the will of God. When we left Italy to come here to Korea, we said, "It is not to come or go which matters ... what matters is to remain in the will of God." We must constantly try to focus our souls on this. It is essential. Then we can say that we love God more than any other thing, and he draws us into union with him.

Question: It happens that, at times, when faced with a difficulty, suffering and love remain in our souls like two separate entities. How do you make it to merge them into one, true love?

Answer: They become one because suffering is for me an encounter with Jesus Forsaken and Jesus Forsaken is my love. This unity between suffering and love is acquired in time, with practice. For a Christian, however, this training is not like any other training one might undertake.

For every act of love on our part Jesus responds with his light and his love. He enkindles in our hearts an ardent love for him. It is to respond to his love then that we go out to meet him in our sufferings.

Question: Chiara, could you tell us what unity is for you now, thirty-eight years from the beginning?

Answer: For me, unity is the presence of the Risen Lord.

Jesus had said that he would remain with us always, to the end of time. And he is with his Apostles; with his bishops. He is present in the poor, in the Eucharist, in his word, but oftentimes we are blind to his presence. In unity, however, his presence bears tremendous witness. Unity reveals him, manifests him, offers him to the world. He said in fact, 'May they be one so that the world may believe." □

MEETING PEOPLE OF PEACE

Another step in the dialogue between the Buddhist members of the Rissho Kosei-kai and members of the Focolare Movement. Enzo Fondi visited Japan two years ago along with other members of the movement who accompanied Chiara Lubich.

by ENZO FONDI

Rome: November 12, 1983

When we saw them arrive at our Mariapolis Center[1] in Rocca di Papa we felt as if we had suddenly been transported thousands of miles away to the other side of the globe. It seemed impossible that two years had passed since we had last met in the Sacred Hall of the Rissho Kosei-kai in Tokyo where Chiara Lubich had addressed 10,000 leaders of the largest Buddhist lay association of Japan on December 28, 1981. It was an unforgettable experience, and now Mr. Nichiko Niwano, accompanied by his wife Yoshie and a group of Rissho Kosei-kai leaders had come to return the visit.

Their President, Nikkyo Niwano, had just been awarded the "Artisan of Peace" prize by the Young Missionary Service in Turin but was in Korea at the time of the awards ceremony participating in the "Bilateral Nippo-Korean Consultation for Religious Science," a very important milestone in restoring the badly damaged relations between Japan and Korea after World War II. He had therefore delegated his son and would-be successor as the leader of the Rissho Kosei-kai, Nichiko, to represent him in Italy. Nichiko Niwano has, in fact, already been assuming more and more responsibility at his father's side.

Mr. Niwano's first stop upon arrival in Rome was to visit Chiara Lubich at the Focolare Center in Rocca di Papa where, as all gathered to pray in the small chapel, the spiritual experience of two years ago was renewed in ever-greater unity and depth. The words spoken by Chiara expressed the common desire and trust in God for whom nothing is impossible: "You know, Lord, that we are thirsting for unity and peace for ourselves and for the whole world. Help us to meet and be together as often as possible and to become, each of us individually and all together, instruments of your peace. May your will prevail and triumph always."

Chiara's prayer on behalf of the focolarini present was echoed by that of our guests: "We pray that through our mutual understanding and through the cooperation among those of us who follow the teaching of God and of Buddha our prayers and activities for world peace may bear evermore abundant fruits of unity."

Photos: C.S. Chiara

OPPOSITE PAGE:
On November 9, 1983, the leaders of the Rissho Kosei-kai were received in a private audience with the Pope in the Vatican. In the photo Pope John Paul II greets Mr. and Mrs. Nichiko Niwano. In the background is Father Marcello Zago of the Secretariat for non-Christians.

ABOVE: The Mariapolis Center at Rocca di Papa. In the small chapel a moment of intense prayer initiated the meeting between the Buddhist delegaton of the Rissho Kosei-kai and leaders of the Focolare Movement. First row (from left to right) Nichiko Niwano, son and designated successor of Rissho Kosei-kai president Nikkyo Niwano; Nichiko's wife Yoshie Niwano; Chiara Lubich, president of the Focolare Movement.

Then their prayer turned into a song asking Bodhisattva (The Enlightened One) for a wisdom as great as the ocean and for the unity of all people in peace and harmony.

The One God, which Chiara had invoked as "creator of heaven and earth, loving and merciful God" reveals himself to those who pray with a spirit of love and reconciliation. In prayer, which is an element common to all great religions, there is the action of the Spirit which penetrates all things. This same Spirit, as Chiara would later say to her guests, is working so that these two movements come together "for a plan which we cannot yet fully grasp but is, without any doubt, in the mind of God."

Chiara's meeting with President Niwano in Tokyo two years ago was followed by other meetings of focolare groups and representatives of the Rissho Kosei-kai in Asia, Europe and the United States, and these contacts have led to an ever-deeper mutual understanding and esteem. She informed Nichiko about the School for Oriental Religions which the Focolare Movement has opened in Manila in the Philippines. It has already completed a course on Buddhism which was attended by the members of the Focolare Movement in the Far East. Among the highly qualified lecturers there were seven bishops. Chiara invited Mr. Niwano and the members of the Rissho

Kosei-kai to participate in these courses and contribute their living witness. She also proposed that the Focolare members in the Philippines offer their cooperation in the social activities initiated by the Rissho Kosei-kai to achieve reconciliation between the Filipinos and the Japanese.

The Focolare Movement and the Rissho Kosei-kai also work together in eight different centers (including the International Center) of the World Conference of Religions for Peace. They are presently working to prepare the fourth International Assembly to be held in Nairobi, Kenya in August.

The meeting of Chiara Lubich and Nichiko Niwano paved the way for further contacts at different levels and in different fields. There is already an ongoing dialogue between leaders of the Rissho Kosei-kai and those of the Focolare Movement in Tokyo.

What a Catholic award means to a Buddhist

Nichiko Niwano is tall in stature with sharp, penetrating eyes—a man of few words. Behind his gentle manners and measured expressions one can detect a strong spiritual training in self-control and introspection. Now and then a faint smile will appear on his lips revealing his simplicity and sense of humor. He has a strong physical resemblance to his father, and seems to have acquired his father's fervor, his creative gift and deep religious spirit. We asked him some questions related to the prize awarded to President Nikkyo Niwano.

Question: President Niwano has been awarded the "Artisan of Peace" Prize by the Missionary Service of Young People in Turin. How important and meaningful is this award to all of you, and what, actually, has been the Rissho Kosei-kai's contribution to world peace?

Answer: President Niwano has always been working for peace, both within Japan and on an international level. Thus he is being honored for many years of constant effort. Also, since this is a Catholic organization bestowing an award on a non-Christian, it gave President Niwano great joy as well as further encouragement to continue his work.

At the same time, let us remember that the Niwano Foundation for Peace recently gave its national award to Archbishop Helder Camara of Recife, Brazil, which means that a Buddhist foundation has honored a Roman Catholic. Now the situation is reversed and this serves to confirm my belief that by intensifying the dialogue among the faithful of different religions, it is possible to break down all barriers.

Before leaving for this trip, I had the feeling that our work and our organization were very small, almost microscopic. Then, as we came here, I realized that we were internationally known, to the point of receiving an award by Sermig, an Italian organization. It was a great surprise for me, and I think that it gave all the members of the Rissho Kosei-kai an awareness of the impact their activity has in the whole world.

As for myself, meeting representatives of Catholic organizations working on a global level has taught me a great deal, and convinced me of the necessity of continuing our work with ever greater attention to this international aspect.

Question: The *Lotus Sutra* the Buddhist sacred book inspires the religious aspects of your movement. Can you quote the passages that inspired your action for peace?

Nichiko Niwano and Chiara Lubich in conversation at the Mariapolis Center at Rocca di Papa.

Refreshments and a toast while visiting Loppiano. From left to right: Mr. Koichiro Taneda, Mr. Nichiko Niwano and his wife Yoshie Niwano, Mr. Keiichi Kawabata.

Answer: Chapter XX of the *Lotus Sutra* clearly explains how the nature of Buddha can be found in every human being. This is why we must deeply respect each person, and we must do it even if we are insulted or injured or even stoned by the very person in whom we venerate the nature of Buddha. Therein lies the foundation of our own inner peace, and of our work for peace in the world as well.

Question: Speaking with President Niwano in Tokyo, I was impressed by his love and concern for the young. What is the Rissho Kosei-kai doing to secure a better future for the new generation both on the national and international level?

Answer: The Youth Section of the Rissho Kosei-kai was founded thirty years ago, but the "Youth Crusade," "The Wings of Youth," "The Boat," and so on, which are our study-tours abroad, started only ten years ago. At first these trips were primarily educational; they gave our young people a chance to see what was going on outside of Japan. But, as time went by, this initiative assumed a new nature and a new purpose, namely to give them an opportunity to exchange religious experiences with young people of other religions. Many who have been on these trips are now deeply aware of the importance of exchange and mutual understanding between people of different religions. This initiative was at first limited only to members of our organization but President Niwano eventually opened the doors to all young people of Japan, extending his invitation to various other religious organizations. The Youth Section of the World Conference of Religions for Peace, for instance, is also participating in our study cruises abroad.

Question: As you know, there is now a great deepening in the relationship between Buddhism and Christianity on all levels. What future do you foresee for this new inter-religious dialogue?

Answer: President Niwano and I are convinced that it is possible to achieve deep communion between the faithful of these two religions. My wife had said earlier that there are many languages in the world, but the language of suffering is the same for all people, and is understood by all. There is a passage in the *Lotus Sutra* where the differences between people are compared to the various heights of trees — one tree is taller, another is shorter, but all are equally sons of Buddha and all possess his same nature. This faith of ours is at the basis of every cooperation and of every effort to bring about a better society.

After visiting with Chiara in Rome and stopping in Florence to accept the "Artisan of Peace" prize in his father's name, Mr. Nichiko Niwano and his party went to Loppiano[2] where they received a very heartfelt welcome. "Even if we didn't speak the same language," one of them commented, "there was true dialogue among us. It was a communication from heart to heart, from faith to faith." "This is not just friendship," said Nichiko Niwano as they left Loppiano, "it is much more; it is being 'of the same family'." Before coming to Italy Mr. Niwano had shared his concern over the fact of the existing language barrier. "But I have seen that there is a common root," he later affirmed. "It is unity. Something has been born which will undoubtedly grow." □

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1) Mariapolis Centers serve for the formation of members and friends of the Focolare Movement.
2)A small city built by the Focolare Movement near Florence, Italy. It embodies a concrete expression of a society founded on the Gospel. Its inhabitants live according to the spirituality of the Focolare Movement.

LUTHER
500 years later

Weighing history and reading modern research, the complex figure of the father of the Reformation is coming always more clearly into focus.

by Annamaria Pericoli

1983, "The Year of Luther," is just over. He has been the focus of attention of many civil and religious celebrations, conferences, symposiums, concerts, theater and television programs and numerous newspaper and magazine articles.

In East Germany, where Eisleben, Luther's birthplace, and many other locations which later became historical due to the events of his life are located, it seems that among the people, the year of Luther enjoyed even greater success than the events surrounding the centenary of Karl Marx. Almost everyone seemed to have found a way to associate him with their cause. This shouldn't surprise us though; something similar happened even in his day, in the passage between the Middle Ages and the Modern Age, when the impact of his thought, his words and his behavior acted as a catalyst on the social, cultural and spiritual scene in Europe

and in a particular way of course, in his own country.

But between history and legend, between hosannas and crucifixions, with all the numerous popular interpretations, a question remains: "Who is the real Luther?"

It is undeniable that Martin Luther belongs to the history of Christianity. "For the Catholic church," Pope John Paul II wrote in his letter of November 6, 1983 to Cardinal Willebrands, president of the Secretariat for Christian Unity, "the name of Martin Luther is linked, across the centuries, to the memory of a sad period and particularly to the experience of the origin of deep ecclesial divisions. For this reason the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther's birth should be for us a reason to meditate, in truth and in Christian charity, on that event fraught with historical significance which was the period of the reformation.... It has become clear that the breach of Church unity cannot

OPPOSITE PAGE: The Wartburg castle stands on a steep hill overlooking the town of Eisenbach in the German Democratic Republic. Luther began here to translate the New Testament from Greek into German.
RIGHT: A well-known portrait of Martin Luther by Lucas Cranach.

A woodcut design depicting Luther's interview in 1518 with Cardinal Cajetan (seated at the table) who was legate of Pope Leo X in Germany.

be traced back either to a lack of understanding on the part of the authorities of the Catholic Church, or solely to Luther's lack of understanding of true Catholicism, even if both factors played their role....
Fault, where it exists, must be recognized, wherever it may lie; where controversy has beclouded one's view, that view must be corrected independently of either party. Besides, we must not allow ourselves to be guided by the intention of setting ourselves up as judges of history, but solely by the motive of understanding better what happened and of becoming messengers of truth. Only by placing ourselves unreservedly in an attitude of purification by means of the truth can we find a shared interpretation of the past and at the same time reach a new point of departure for the dialogue of today."[1]

In reality, scientific research by both evangelicals and catholics has reached a substantial agreement on a more complete historical judgment. As Aloys Klein of the Secretariat for Christian Unity pointed out in one of his studies, Luther was not a psychopath or a den of iniquity and heresy; neither was he the only guilty figure in causing the rupture of the Church. The same protestant research also admits that neither was Luther a great saint or an illustrious doctor of the Church; nor was he the "rule" for all questions of faith and life to be adopted without critical examination. "One must recognize his sincere Christian intention," Aloys Klein affirms, "in criticizing the Church and the various situations of his age just as one must recognize Luther's personal conviction that he was called by God to renew theology and the Church. Luther was marked by a very complex psychological structure and he committed many grave errors both in the eyes of the Church and in the eyes of civil society (for example in his behavior towards Jewish people, Anabaptists and peasants). It is an objective observation, behind which lies the mystery

of subjective and objective guilt."

"There is clearly outlined the deep religious feeling of Luther," the Pope continued in his letter, "who was driven with burning passion by the question of eternal salvation." "This 'deep religious feeling' is true all throughout Luther's life," Aloys Klein explained: as a monk, as a theology professor, as a preacher, as a man of prayer and as a father of a family.

Research, even in the area of official Lutheran-Catholic dialogue, does not yet agree on singling out the true line of demarcation which separates Luther and the Catholic Church on the doctrinal questions of faith. Thus, Pope John Paul II wrote in his letter, "The clarification of history which looks back on the past for its significance that still lasts, must go *pari passu* with the dialogue of faith in which at present we are engaged in the quest for unity." Luther, at the outset, did not intend to divide the Church, but to reform it. The work of the mixed Lutheran-Catholic commission is at the point where the way to seek an understanding is open even if not yet defined. Doctor Martin Luther is there, Aloys Klein had asked, as a stumbling block or catalyst of understanding for the ecumenical movement?

"This is the fundamental question," he concluded in his Vatican Radio interview last year, "in this year in which we commemorate the 500th anniversary of his birth. We are also celebrating the year of

RIGHT: Wittenburg where Luther wrote his famous "Ninety-five Theses."
BELOW: "The Council of Trent" (conserved in the Louvre) by an anonymous painter of the XVI Century. The Council lasted from 1545 to 1563 and brought about a renewal in theology and in the Church.

penance and reconciliation. Reconciliation also includes a commitment to research, in charity and justice, until unity and peace among Christians grows."

Today, in the native land of Luther, religious struggles are a remote fact for most of the younger generations and, especially in East Germany, young people meet together not to discuss "divine wrath and grace," an equally remote topic, but to discuss anti-militarism, human rights, a pluralistic society, freedom of conscience in both East and West, in every religous or nonreligious belief. And this is also a reality which urges us on in the search for avenues toward unity among all Christians.

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1) Excerpts from the *Osservatore Romano* English Edition, November 21, 1983.

Cardinal John Willebrands

BUILDING THE PRESENT TOGETHER

We are publishing excerpts from the talk of Cardinal John Willebrands of November 11, 1983, in the Church of St. Thomas at Leipzig, East Germany, on the occasion of the official celebration of the fifth anniversary of the birth of Martin Luther.

The Holy Father, in the letter which he sent me, expressed an appreciation of the research on Martin Luther undertaken by both Catholics and Evangelicals and their findings which show many points in common. I would like to take advantage of this occasion in order to extend a word of appreciation to all those who, in the past and in the present, have dedicated themselves with genuine seriousness and sincere love to seeking out the truth. Their studies show that there are many ways of presenting the life of Martin Luther and the interpretation of his theological inheritance by historians both within and outside the Church. Any theologian would be taken aback by the enormous amount of material (more than 100 volumes) which Luther wrote. Would any scientist be able to approach his ideas on religion in such a way so as to be able to understand, in the proper light, the 'real' Luther, his unmistakeable personality, nothwithstanding his human limitations which often hinder a non-emotional approach?... It should not surprise us that both Catholic and Evangelican research cannot give a uniform answer to the numerous questions which arise, and that the many and important problems involved must still be subjected to a just comparison. All the more reason then to continue with our theological efforts.

Martin Luther is present not only in the Christian Evangelical life; he is also present in the whole of the Christian Church. For this reason the theological heritage of this very gifted and profoundly religious man must be read must be read together in a critical process of learning, following St. Paul's affirmation so loved by Luther: "Test everything; retain what is good" (1 Thes. 5:21).

In 1970 at Evian, I had the opportunity of pointing out some of the aspects and central issues with which to begin an unbiased dialogue on Luther. If we want to give the proper value to this historical and theological understanding and to its importance for the reconciliation and reunification among Christians, we cannot delay our research for an always deeper and more complete awareness of the truth. We must have faith in the unifying power of truth and illuminating force of love. "Let us profess the truth in love and grow to the full maturity of Christ the head" (Eph. 4:15). If we are faithful to the truth and to love we are also moving along the way of justice.

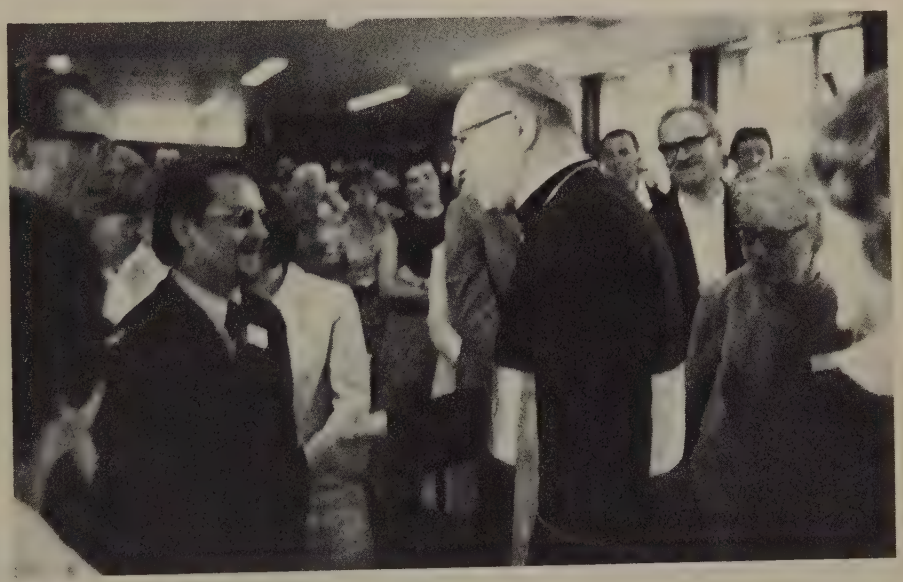
Concerned for the integrity of the truth which has been revealed, and in the effort of maintaining the Church as one, holy, catholic and apostolic, the Church excommunicated "brother Martin" with the Bull of Pope Leo X: "Docet Romanum Pontificem," on January 3, 1521. Through it the Church wanted to demonstrate in an unambiguous way that there were errors in the teachings and personal attitude of the monk and professor of

theology, Martin Luther. Following this, in the certainty of understanding and evaluating in a correct and objective way the spiritual and theological heritage of the reformers, the Council of Trent made the effort (within the limits of the possibilities of that time) of assuming the requirements outlines in the Sacred Scriptures and by the authentic tradition of the Church for the renewal of theology and the Church itself. It rejected and condemned as heresy certain opinions and proposals which were in contrast to the unanimous tradition of the Church and its heritage of faith.

History is what it is even if, under one aspect or another, historical facts can appear today in a new light and show themselves open to a deeper and more extensive appreciation of the truth.

The Synod of Bishops which concluded a few days ago left a strong impression on me. The reflections and discussions revolved around a general theme: "Reconciliation and Penance in the Mission of the Church." The numerous interventions made me realize how similar and also how varied are the difficulties and problems within the Latin Church of the XVI century and that of today. The distressingly urgent question of Luther: "How can I find a merciful God?" unfortunately does not exist for many people today. They no longer ask it because they no longer experience the reality of guilt and sin. On the other hand, this can be perceived only if one experiences in a very living way the reality of God. Pope John Paul II said: "It is necessary to rediscover the sense of sin, the loss of which is connected with that more radical and secret loss of the sense of God."[1]

The primeval power of evil, the weakness of man and the all powerful nature of God were the central issues for this professor of theology, for this man of prayer, the preacher and pastor Martin Luther. He took the question to heart with such great passion that, under a certain aspect and with a certain right, he could be defined as an attorney of God, of his majesty, of his love and his justice. At the same time he could be called an attorney for mankind which, in the bending of itself in all its wretchedness, is solely dependent on the grace of God, the God of grace who saves mankind in its guilt. Many of our contemporaries, even those in so-called Christian countries have lost the sense of the reality expressed in these words. They speak of the absence of God, of personal emancipation and self-realization. They no longer know their true situation, they no longer see the world or themselves under the judgment and the grace of God.



Cardinal John Willebrands, president of the Secretariat for Christian Unity, at an ecumenical meeting of Catholics and Lutherans promoted by the Center One *of the Focolare Movement, held at the Mariapolis Center in Rocca di Papa, Italy.*

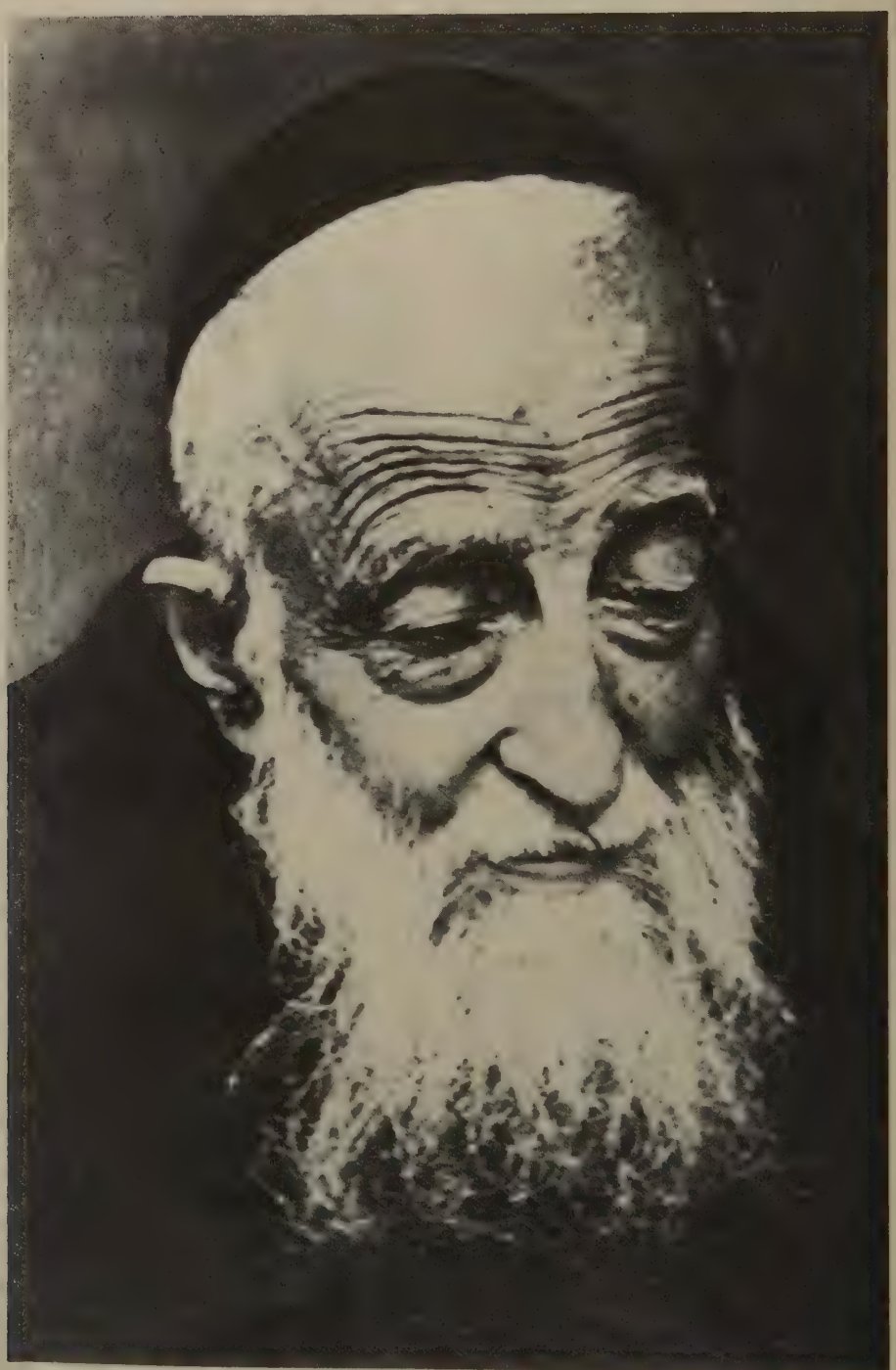
Isn't the hour more than ripe to examine together and ask ourselves in what measure we can give to today's world a common witness of the Good News of our redemption? Remembering the historical facts and guilt, shouldn't we be able to extract from them fruits with which to build the present together? □

1) Talk to the Roman Curia December 23, 1982.

FATHER LEOPOLD'S PARLOR

A man of great sensitivity and vision, Saint Leopold Mandic offered his life for the unity of the Church. His canonizaton took place on October 16, 1983.

by ORESTE PALIOTTI



His appearance certainly wasn't much to speak of — a tired old face, a skinny curved, barely-five-foot frame moving along at an awkward halting gait. His heavy accent betrayed his Croatian origin. Yet when this seventy-year-old Capuchin used to appear at the far end of the narrow corridor leading to his room an audible murmur of admiration would arise among the many penitents who had come, even from far away, to ask him to hear their confession or to seek spiritual guidance.

"Here I am, my friends, here I am," he would greet them warmly and thank them for coming, almost as if they were doing him a favor. Then, while the penitent knelt down, Father Leopold would sit back, practically disappearing into an old armchair, only his arthritis-ridden hand could be seen from time to time raised in the sign of absolution.

He always listened patiently and at the end would voice some thought, always straight to the point of the issue, yet said in an almost apologetic tone, as though he himself were the penitent. He was always determined to clear up any doubts in the person's mind — "Leave the responsibility to me," he would say; he was eager to console, "Don't worry; just lay everything on my shoulders. I'll take care of the rest," and he would encourage those who faltered to overcome their trials and weaknesses: "Have faith, have faith."

At times, someone kneeling beside him had difficulty in beginning to speak. "Don't be embarassed because of me," he would reassure the penitent. "Although I'm a priest and a monk I'm just a poor wretch myself. If the good Lord didn't keep a firm hold on my reins, I'd do things much worse than anyone else, so don't be afraid."

"They say I'm too soft, but when a person comes in and kneels down before me isn't that proof enough that he is seeking God's forgiveness?"

He was so convinced of his nothingness ("I'm good for nothing, even ridiculous little creature"), that when faced with a display of esteem, affection or veneration it distressed him to the point of tears. One day a penitent came for the first time and made the mistake of sitting in the confessor's armchair. Rather than embarass him, Father Leopold took his place on the kneeler and listened to the man's confession on his knees.

His bare and dreary room had become a kind of little parlor where every visitor felt at ease. Whatever their social standing, all were treated with the same delicate courtesy, particularly those most afflicted with misfortune, and especially women victimized by drunken and violent husbands.

Seeing him, the image of meekness, surrounded by people, yet never impatient, it was hard to believe that by nature he was very withdrawn, almost a loner, hot-tempered, a true fellow-countryman of the fiery St. Jerome.

A particular episode during Father Leopold's childhood accounts for his vocation as a priest and confessor. "When I was about eight years old, I committed a misdemeanor which didn't seem to me to be so terrible and I still don't think it was. My sister scolded me and took me to the parish priest to be punished. I made my confession and then, after some rather harsh words, the priest made me kneel on the floor in the middle of the church. I was deeply hurt by this and said to myself, "Why should a child be punished so severely for something so small? When I grow up I want

Father Leopold Mandic, a priest of the Order of Friars Minor Capucchin. His canonization on October 16, 1983 fell within this Holy Year and also took place during the Bishop's Synod on the theme of penance and reconciliation. The Pope wanted to point to a model for confessors, a man who lived all his apostolate as a minister of this sacrament.

to be a monk and a confessor and have lots of mercy for everyone."

It was mercy which matured through constant contact with suffering and human misery of all kinds, but Father Leopold was also noncompromising when it came to the understanding of and the adherence to church doctrine. "When I hear a confession and offer guidance," he once commented, "I feel the full weight of my ministry and I cannot betray my conscience. The truth comes first." If need be, in other words, he could also be severe as one of his penitents found out one day. Coming out of the confessional after a long session that man was heard to murmur, "What a cold shower that was!"

Some of his superiors and brother monks accused him of laziness and negligence because more often than not he showed up late for community activities. He had a hard time, in fact, coordinating his vocation as a confessor and spiritual guide with the schedule and his duties in the community. This was a great suffering for him because he was accustomed to recognizing the will of God in the words of his superiors. Taking his mild ways for excessive indulgence they nicknamed him "brother absolution" or the "easy-going confessor."

"They say I'm too soft," he once remarked to justify his approach, "but when a person comes in and kneels down before me, isn't that proof enough that he is seeking God's forgiveness?" Pointing to the crucifix he continued, "If he were to scold me for being too "easy going" I would answer: 'You, my dear Master, gave me this unfortunate example; but at least I haven't yet reached the insanity of dying for these souls!"

Father Leopold in his tiny room at the Capuchin Convent of Padua, Italy where he heard the confessions of countless penitents. It is the only part of the convent that remained intact after the air raid of May 14, 1944. Father Leopold himself had predicted it: "The convent will be badly damaged, but not this cell where God has lavished so much mercy on souls. It must remain as a monument to his goodness." This photo was taken eight days before Father Leopold's death on July 30, 1942.

On the contrary, he felt very strongly the need to make up for the sinner, not only with his prayers but by actually paying for their sins in person. One evening, one of his brother monks found him still in the chapel at a very late hour and questioned his behavior. "I'm doing a little penance for those I confessed today," he replied, "I gave them a rather light penance so I have to make up the rest" — as if sitting ten to twelve hours in his room, steaming hot in the summer and freezing cold in the winter were not enough. He had done it for fifty-two years in spite of constant pain due to his poor physical condition — crippling arthritis, a stomach ailment, conjunctivitis and frequent attacks of fever.

Here is an example of his sense of realism: "I well understand how hard it is for you to bear this heavy cross," he told one penitent. "I'm not telling you to be patient because I know all too well how easy it is to remind others to be patient but how difficult it is to put it into practice oneself. I'll just tell you what our faith teaches us in regard to this matter and I'll be very frank about it." At another moment he had counselled, "Let's thank our Master for having done things the right way, for choosing an ordinary man to act as judge and confessor rather than giving the task to an angel from heaven. Woe to us if it were an angel to hear our confession. How frighteningly severe he would be. But a human being understands other human beings and the sacraments were made for humans."

"God is the guide of every soul," he often said, "and every soul has its own life. The Holy Spirit is our first spiritual director, and he will always be the first. It is he who makes saints. It is our duty to merely recognize him and go along with his plans rather than obstruct them with our short-sighted view of things."

"You had the feeling that Father Leopold knew how to look into your deepest self," one penitent recalled. "You felt as if he knew you and wanted to help you to know yourself. I couldn't say whether it was intuition or insight. The fact is that in his presence you felt as

"Saint Leopold did not leave us any theological or literary works, he did not attract people with his culture, he did not found any social works. To all those who knew him, he was nothing but a poor friar: small and sickly.

His greatness lay elsewhere: *in immolating himself*, in giving himself, day after day, for the entire span of his priestly life, for fifty-two years, in the silence, in the reserve, in the *humility of a confession room*: "the good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep". Father Leopold was always there ready and smiling, prudent and modest, the discreet confidant and faithful father of souls, a respectful teacher and an understanding and patient spiritual advisor.

If we would want to describe with a single word, as his penitents and confreres did during his life, then he is "the confessor"; he knew only how "to hear confessions". And it is precisely here that his greatness lies: in his fading into the background to give place to the true Shepherd of souls. He expressed his commitment in this way: "We hide everything, even what may appear to be a gift of God, so as not to make it an instrument of profit. To God alone be honor and glory! If it were possible we should pass over the earth like a shadow that leaves no trace." And to whoever asked him how he could live that way, he would answer, "It is my life!"

Pope John Paul II
during the canonization Mass
of Saint Leopold Mandic
October 16, 1983

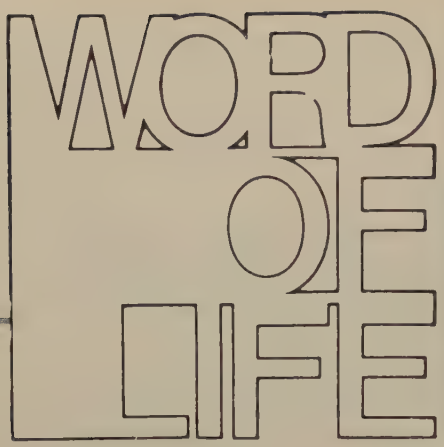
though you were being put under a powerful spotlight which lit up any inner darkness. How many spiritual problems he solved with that calm, tired voice of his, 'Can't you see, my friend, can't you see' and he did make you see because he himself had seen, heard and lived through your ordeal.

If someone had asked Father Leopold to explain the reason for his existence, he would have received a simple answer: his great eagerness to help achieve the unity of the Church. Those days were still far from the ecumenical vision which the Second Vatican Council later gave shape to as it promoted dialogue, a common desire voiced among the churches. But he, the son of Catholic Croatia, possessed a sensitivity and vision that went beyond the confines of his own people. It is interesting to note that as far back as 1887, when he was twenty-one years old and still in the minor seminary, he felt the urgent call *to promote church unity* with his prayers, his actions, and all his strength.

His particular passion was the "Orient." To his dying day, Father Leopold dreamed of going back to his homeland, to his own people, to start from there what he held to be his true mission. But his poor health, his obedience to his superiors and his ever-growing number of penitents denied him his dream. He still managed though to be an apostle of unity within the normal environment of his convent and his life as a confessor. "Every soul who seeks my ministry will be my "Orient." People who are not too familiar with saints may think that they are people who upon reaching the end of their earthly journey are ready to face death without spiritual trials; but it is not so. They, too, experience fear — not the fear of those who do not know where they're going or what is awaiting them; it is rather the fear of a sensitive soul who, at approaching its encounter with God, has a clear vision of its own misery and nothingness, but at the same time trusts, deep down, in the mercy of God.

"What frightens me most," Father Leopold confessed a few days before his death, "is not so much the idea of our physical end, but the thought of God's tremendous justice awaiting us after death — and I am a sinner." As death drew near: "I feel I'm not ready for paradise yet."

During his last days his little room had become an infirmary. He suffered terrible pain from a tumor which made it impossible for him to retain even liquid nourishment. Even with all this, he didn't refuse one of his brother monks who asked him to hear his confession in the middle of the night. A few hours later, he even tried to drag himself to the chapel to say Mass. But he didn't make it. They found him lying in the corridor unconscious, and shortly afterward he quietly breathed his last. It happened just as he had always wished: "I want to die on the battlefield." It was the morning of July 30, 1942. □



"So then, if you are bringing your offering to the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar, go and be reconciled with your brother first, and then come back and present your offering."

(Mt. 5:23)

This is one of those sentences of Jesus which, if well understood, could provoke a total change in us and, if lived by everyone in the world, would assure peace forever.

Jesus had in mind an Israelite going up to the temple to offer his sacrifice. We could think today of a member of the faithful going to church.

The offering of a sacrifice for the Israelite living at the time of Jesus—just as the participation at the liturgy for Christians today—represents the most important moment, the highest expression of one's relationship with God. Well then! Jesus affirms the importance of complete accord among brothers and sisters by saying that if one is about to offer his sacrifice and remembers that there is some disharmony between him and his neighbor, he should first go and make peace. The sacrificial offering, which for us Christians would be the participation in the liturgy risks being an empty act if there is discord between our neighbor and ourselves. The first sacrifice which God expects from us is that we strive to be always in harmony with everyone.

"So then, if you are bringing your offering to the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar, go and be reconciled with your brother first, and then come back and present your offering."

With this statement Jesus does not seem to be presenting any substantial novelty with respect to the Old Testament. The prophets had in fact already clarified the fact that God prefers love of neighbor, mercy and compassion for the weak to burnt offerings (Hos. 6:6). Sacrifices made by those who oppress the poor are unbearable to him (Is. 1:10-20). Instead of being an act of praise to God they are an insult.

What is new about this concept is this: Jesus affirms that we must always be the ones to take the initiative so that there is continuous harmony, so that fraternal communion is always maintained. He thus urges us to live the commandment of love of neighbor to its root. He does not say in fact, 'if you remember having offended your brother'. He says, 'if you remember that your brother has something against you'. For Jesus, the very fact that we remain indifferent when there is disharmony with our neighbor, even if we perhaps are not directly responsible for it, is already a good enough reason for not being pleasing to God, for being rejected by him.

Jesus wants to put us on our guard not only against the most serious explosions of hatred, but also against any expression or attitude which in some way denotes a lack of consideration, a lack of love for our neighbor.

"So then, if you are bringing you offering to the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar, go and be reconciled with your brother first, and then come back and present your offering."

How can we put this word of life into practice?

We must try never to be superficial in our relationships, and instead search out the innermost corners of our heart to make sure that we eliminate even the slightest indifference, or any lack of generosity, every feeling of superiority, every lack of consideration towards anyone.

Acts of unkindness or impatience can be made up for with a kind word of apology or a gesture of friendship. When it is not possible, what counts is our total inner change of attitude. Any instinctive drive to reject our neighbor must be overcome by an attitude of total acceptance of the other, of boundless mercy of complete forgiveness, of concern for the other's needs.

If we do this, then we can offer God all the gifts we want and he will accept them and take them into consideration. Our relationship with him will deepen, and we will reach that union with him that will be our happiness both now and in the future.

Chiara Lubich

EXPERIENCES

DETERMINATION TO LOVE

One of my teenage sons was hurt at school during a sporting event. At first the injury didn't appear to be too serious but it was determined that a trip to the emergency room was in order. I could see my son's tenseness and also his outright pain and I tried to comfort him and calm him the best I could.

After he was released and at home resting, his discomfort and pain seemed to get the best of him. Since he had injured his eye, it was hard for him to get around since he was dizzy and the eye was patched. I did everything I could to make him comfortable, from fixing his favorite foods and always having ice chips available to keeping the drapes drawn so that the the rooms remained dark. At times it was difficult because of his negative attitude and his impatience but I was determined to love and live the word of life, "Anyone who wants to become great among you must be your servant" (Mk. 10:43).

On the third day my son said, "Mom, I realize I've really been impatient and overbearing and I'm sorry." He then proceeded to share with me all the uncertainty and fright he had felt since the accident thinking he might never be able to see from that eye again. All the anguish seemed to pour out of him. I listened and tried to assure him of God's love even in this situation. This moment of sharing created a beautiful atmosphere of love between us. I could see he was relieved and happy and our relationship got off to a new start.

J.R.

From the teacher's desk:

"HEY, TEACH, WHAT'S YOUR TRICK?

What ever has become of the obedient American youth of yesteryear? Why is there such a change? Who is able to explain the drug abuse, arrogance, immorality and downright vandalism that occurs day in and day out in our schools, both public and private? Kids got in trouble all too often. What is the problem?

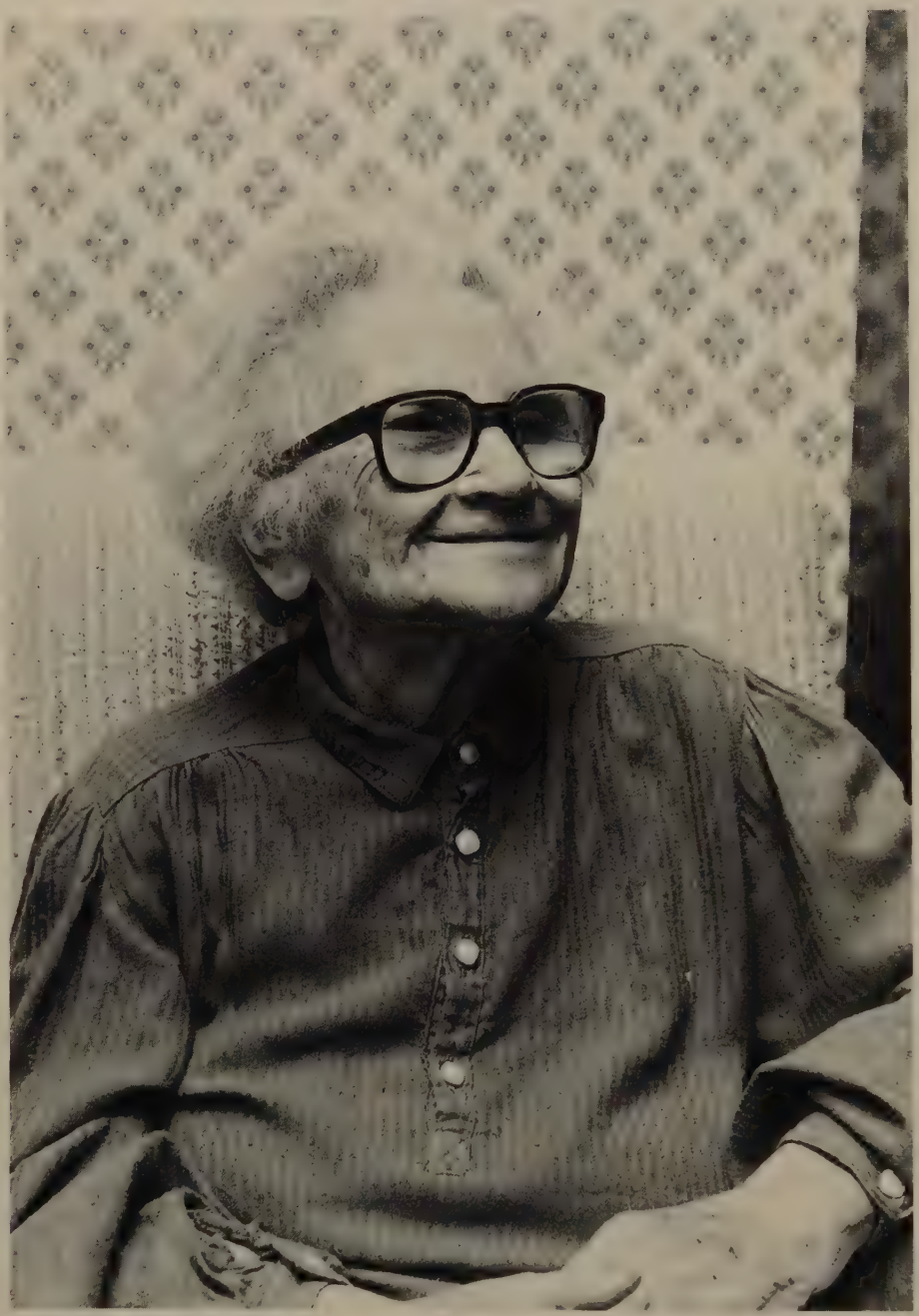
Well, to say outright what *the* problem is would be an impossible undertaking because we all know there is no *one* problem but many factors which are involved here. As a public school educator in an American high school, I can certainly tell you I have had my share of kids who come under some of the categories mentioned above. And yet, I can tell you that I have been able to solve some of the "dangerous situations." How? A simple ingredient: LOVE. It sounds trite and cliche-ish but its true. Let me give an example.

I remember one day, the first day of school, when one of my students (whom I didn't know at that moment), walked into my room and sat down quietly. When I asked her to kindly move to a seat closer to the front, she slammed her books down on the desk I was pointing to. Well each day was a repeat performance of the day before. She'd sit in the back, I'd ask her to move up, she'd do so with the same comment: the throwing and banging of her books on the desk. I could have screamed at her through all of this, but I tried to be patient and love her. Also in class, she would never answer when I'd call on her but would arrogantly sit and watch me. Well, at this point I really tried to be even more love to her. I felt I could answer her actions with understanding because here was a kid who was calling out for attention.

Then the final blow; I found writing on her desk one day. It read: "My French teacher hates me because I'm Chinese." For me this was by far the greatest obstacle; the deepest suffering I had ever experienced with this student. I kept asking myself: "What did I do wrong?" I did try to show kindness and to really share her preoccupations with her. At this point, I felt God had to really take over. So I made a deal with Him. "Listen, Lord, now its *Your* turn. You must help me find a concrete way to love this kid and I will do it with even a greater effort." And a few days later He answered beautifully. In came my little friend asking if I could give her extra help after school. My big chance. I jumped at it with an enthusiastic "yes!" And we worked together.

As a result, I can say that this student became another person. She began smiling here in class and performed much better academically. Our relationship changed in a very beautiful way. At the end of the school year, she asked if she should take French the following year and wanted to know if I was going to teach the course. Well this happened two years ago but even today, although she is no longer in my class, she still comes to see me to ask my advice. This is just one kid, *one* out of millions. But it is a start.

G. G.



"I want to build
me a house,
and stones I carry
and pebbles.
Its name
I found it
long ago;
I call it
God's repose."

ELSE KORNIS

Else Kornis—poet writer and long-time friend has now arrived at the house of her soul.
Long has been her life, a life of joy and pain and especially much love.
Love remains, love continues, for we also long to reach that house.

CONFRONTATION

In the last number we began a series of imagined 'News Reports' from the first Century A.D. on the way the truths of the Christian faith were first received. In this second part, we report on the confrontation of the new Christian ideas with the classical culture of the Greco-Roman world.

by SILVANO COLA

Profiteers and swindlers have always existed! If there is a possibility of a bandwagon there will always be those with an unfailing nose for money, ready to pounce where others do not see a shadow of interest! Such a man was Simon (known as Simon the Wonder-man, or Simon the Magician!)

Was Simon wicked? No! An opportunist? Maybe! Maybe he had even convinced himself he was a benefactor of the people; certainly of those people who were always happy to escape the hard realities of life by gazing open mouthed at some new phenomenon; and Simon could offer them that! He was a talented illusionist. From there it was but a short step to making them believe he was a god —especially as a small group of people from a sect in Samaria had already begun to look on him as "the divine power that is called Great."

But one thing is certain—he didn't expect to see all his fans disappear in one fell swoop! It happened like this: Philip the Apostle was passing through Samaria and had begun preaching the Name of the Lord Jesus as the Christ who had died and risen from the dead; and was proclaiming the Kingdom of God.

"This extraordinary event! This new dimension! This is the Good News that God has made known to us for our salvation!" he proclaimed: and the people, who by and large have plenty of common sense, on seeing Philip producing even more wonderful cures than their 'Magician'—and what is more, cures that were obviously genuine since the people remained cured—sensed the genuineness of Philip's ministry. Besides which the people were impressed by the fact that Philip, unlike Simon, refused to be considered as some sort of a god (as the apostle Peter had also done) because—as he pointed out—the miracles he did were not done in his own power or his own name, but in the Name of God. Above all the people saw that Philip was not trying to make anything out of his ministry, that he was scrupulously honest, and actually believed in (and baptized in) the Name that he proclaimed.

Genuinely impressed

Simon the Magician, incredulous and openly worried, went to investigate Philip, and claimed to be genuinely impressed.

Philip had with him Peter and John who had come up from, Jerusalem especially to help him. Watching them, Simon noticed that when the apostles stretched out their hands on to the heads of all those who were baptized with the words, "Receive the Holy Spirit," the people just burst with joy 'as though they had entered another world', as he himself later said. He approached Peter like a market trader, asking him how much he would have to pay for that same power." Peter exploded, almost losing his temper! He turned on Simon , "May your silver be lost forever, and you with it, for thinking that money could buy what God has given for nothing!" (Then he calmed down, and his voice changed.) "But there is still a chance even for you, if you want it!" Peter added. "Repent of this wickedness of yours and pray to the Lord; you may still be forgiven for thinking as you did."

Exactly what happened next is not known. The threat of losing all that silver certainly had a devasting effect on the profiteer. Moaning and groaning Simon begged Peter:

"Pray to your Lord for me yourselves so that none of the things you have spoken about may happen to me."

Nothing happened to him, and he returned to his own town, but his devotees stopped worshipping him as a god!

What then is a god?

The apparently trivial event of Simon the Charlatan, reported above, has, however, taken on an unexpected and significant importance during this first century after Christ. Throughout history, and even today, people have been treated as gods (both before and after death) and have made people worship them. What then is a 'god?'

For the Christians this is not a problem; for the rest of the world it is! Why is this?

God is only a problem if you do not recognize in him the Spirit of Reality on whom depends, and who alone can give meaning to, your life, my life, and the life of the world, say the Christian teachers. In short, to know God is a "problem" if he is not instinctly recognized as a loving father (as one of their leaders, John, recently wrote in a letter to the community) and accepted as a person who loves you and who waits for you to come to him, (since, we must certainly all die) and if this is not true, then what meaning would our brief existence hold?

In another letter to the Christian communities the apostle Paul has explained it in this manner: if God is not considered as the one who created us in his own nature, and therefore does not intend to destroy us in death but rather, as he did with Jesus, to unite us to himself in his own Life, resurrected with the Resurrected Lord, then, instead of recognizing and loving him (as a child loves his or her parent) if all we want to do is to 'understand him,' with our head, then certainly God is no longer God but a problem.

Facing the philosphers

The apostle Paul on a preaching mission to Athens, the cultural capital of the Greco-Roman empire, faced the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers on their own ground, without fear or embarrassment, on "The nature of God."

The philosopher Epicurus and his school claim that reality consists only of material things, and that it does not need any divine intervention. The Stoic philosophers speak of a universal law in which both things and man find their reason for their existence, and their destiny. God, in fact, is not—for them—a living person, distinct from both us and the universe.

To a certain extent these 'pagans', and above all the Stoics, have an understanding of 'religiosity.' Paul himself found a street altar inscribed 'To An Unknown God'. Speaking to the Council of the Areopagus, at the risk of being declared mad, he met the challenge head on. Taking the inscription as the subject of his speech he tried to make his audience understand that the divinity they venerated in ignorance *was* the One God who had created the universe; and the God of Israel who had manifested himself in the person of Jesus.

Philosphers are forever demanding proofs and, as his climax, Paul called out: "Do you want proof?" (There was a murmur of general approval), "God has publicly proved this by raising this man Jesus from the dead," and since Jesus is none other than the first-born Son of God, and the example for every human being, it follows that we too will rise again like him, in a new life and for eternity!

Paul's words were drowned with laughter. For Greek philosophers this talk of resurrection sounded like nonsense! The more well-mannered ones, however, undertook to discuss the subject again later.

Unexpected support for the speaker came from one of the elders of the city—or Areopagites—called Dionysius. He unostentatiously detached himself from the philosophical 'school' of which he was a member, and attached himself to Paul. Several women who had been following the debate also joined his group.They were impressed that in Paul's reasoning there was an extra significance (absent from the male-oriented philosophies to which they were accustomed) which allowed women to have been created in the image of God! These women left the creators of many words to follow the Creator, and the Word Himself.

The Stoas around the Market Place of Athens, and all the Roman Empire, buzzed with a babble of God and man. They are all the same eventually. However much man tries to convince himself that God is

The Apostles. 5th Century, Catalan Art Museum Barcelona.

only a fable fabricated to keep people in line, just like the ogre was invented to frighten children into being good, sooner or later, when one least expects it, this question challenges the mind and demands an answer.

A question from the man in the street

What then is the argument? The Christians say that this Being, this Other, really exists; distinct from the world; the cause and reason for our very existence. In what way can such as He have a personal relationship with such as ourselves? This is the question from the man in the street.

Paul, the Christian intellectual and champion of the cause in every market place, like everyone else has faced this problem. This one-time persecutor of Christians who had the personal experience of knowing God in an intimate revelation of Jesus, has dedicated what everyone concedes to be a highly educated, and superior intelligence to explaining his own experience.

The God of Jesus is a loving God. That is what they say. This is, without doubt, the highest idea of what God "is" that has been propounded since the beginning of the world: Christians claim to know this by experience.

In every market place where Christians speak, the same questions get asked ... "If God is loving, how is it that evil exists?" "If God loves mankind, why does he let them suffer war! famine! or plagues, malice and all manner of wickednesses that exist in man?"

The case of the intellectuals

Recently an intellectual of Alexandria, known as Basilides, distressed his fellow Christian teachers with his ideas. He claims to be able to explain away all the problems. His authority is none other than the ancient Persian philosopher, Zarathustra, who maintained that there were two gods, one good and one evil, and that they were perpetually in conflict with one another.

Zarathustra taught that there were three different worlds in existence all at the same time. The first is the world of the Supreme God. Beneath him, and flowing from him, is a world consisting of 365 heavens; and the last and lowest of these heavens is our world. Everything which is below our moon is material and dominated by an inferior deity, part good and part evil, and subordinate to the Supreme God ...!

Traditional Christians, of course, are asking the obvious question ... "Who then is Jesus?" The exponents of this new Wisdom declare: "Jesus is the Spirit of the Supreme God, sent to our world to redeem it from slavery to the inferior god. Jesus appeared to be a man, but he was something of an optical illusion."

This Basilides, who claims to be a disciple of a man called Glaukias, who, in his turn is said to have been a disciple of Peter, leaves much that is unexplained. He cannot say whether Jesus suffered on the cross. He does not believe that the innocent can suffer, and proclaims that if the martyrs suffer they cannot be totally innocent. So what of Jesus? Ordinary Christians are profoundly disturbed.

Mystical science fiction has struck at theology! The mystical ideas of Ancient Egypt and Babylonia are nothing in comparison with the fanciful imaginings of a teacher called Valentinus of Alexandria.

Valentinus has taken the ideas of Basilides and complicated them still further. Man, he claims, is divided into three categories: the spiritual—namely those like himself who have reached 'Total Knowledge,' and are called Gnostics, claim that they are above moral law.

Below them come the 'psychis' followed by the simple Christians who—poor things—still need Christ's redemption!

Marcion, an accomplished theologian but tainted with the ideas of the 'Gnostics,' was asked to leave the Church in Pontus. He left Asia Minor altogether and went to Rome. In the hope of making friends with the Church there he donated 200,000 sestertli towards its welfare.
The ideas and behavior of Marcion, however, were judged 'incompatible with the healthy tradition presented by the popes and bishops,' and the Church in Rome gave him back his money declaring that he was not a Christian and cutting him off from communion with the Church!

Marcion left Rome declaring that the God of the Old Testament was a cruel and intransigent God who had nothing in common with the Christ of the New Testament, a God of love and mercy. A very convenient theology, as someone said to him. 'It means you can do as you like and expect Christ always to forgive you.'

Curiosity is aroused

Widespread curiosity is growing, both inside and outside the Christian communities. Not so much because many contradictory interpretaions of the person of God the Father, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit have sprung up, because it is fairly obvious that if the nature of God is to be known only by his own revelation, human reason is bound to indulge in every possible whim and fancy to 'explain' it and make it comprehensible, even though they are doomed to failure! The apostle Paul, who is already considered a saint and co-founder of the Church, wrote that we on earth can only have a limited knowledge of God, and that only when we are 'risen from the dead' shall we see God 'face to face' and 'know him as he knows us.'

Curiosity is aroused even more however—especially in the world at large—as to whether the Apostles and their successors, the popes and bishops of the church, will have the sixth sense with which to understand who has the right understanding of faith in the God whom Jesus knew and revealed; and who, on the contrary, will tear it to pieces as they try to reduce God to an 'object' of human understanding!

The establishment has stated that Basilides, Valentinus and Marcion were 'heretics.' It means that the teaching of these men contradicts that which the authorities claim was revealed to them. For example, to those who say Jesus was truly Christ and truly God, but *not* truly man, but that his body only had the appearance of humanity, the Church must say 'heretic.' Similarly, if another proclaims 'Jesus is true man, born of Mary with a truly human body, but he was not truly God until he had been baptized by John the Baptist, (when God truly entered into him and adopted his body as his own, so that Jesus could work miracles), but when Jesus was about to die on the cross then God abandoned him so that he died as a man, again the Church must say 'Heretic,' and teacher and teaching are driven out.

What then is meant by 'Being a Christian' today? So far it seems to me that one must not reason too much, but only believe! But believe what?□

What is the Focolare Movement?

THE BEGINNINGS

FOCOLARE means "hearth," "family fireside." What first strikes people when they come in contact with members of the Focolare, whether in small groups or in large gatherings, is the atmosphere of a family. It is a family formed by many different people in various walks of life. The Focolare Movement is also known as the "Work of Mary." Under this name it was approved by Pope John XXIII in 1962.

The Focolare Movement began in 1943 in Italy. In the midst of the terrible destruction of World War II, Chiara Lubich realized that God is the only one worth living for. As a result, she began to center her life on the Gospel, together with a small group of young women who followed her. Their ideal became one of striving toward the fulfillment of Jesus' last prayer to the Father: "May they all be one" (Jn.17:21).

The life of Chiara and her first companions, and the spiritual way they spontaneously followed, gave rise to the unique form of spirituality of the Focolare Movement, a spirituality of unity. It has proved to be a powerful means of introducing the Gospel into modern life, of going to God together.

WHO ARE THE FOCOLARINI

Single men and women live in separate communities called Focolare Centers. Their principal aim is to achieve unity among themselves through mutual charity practiced twenty-four hours a day. They follow the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience. They work as other laymen and women in regular jobs and professions.

Some married persons, even though continuing to live in their families, participate fully in the life of either the men's or women's Focolare Centers in their common effort to achieve this same unity. They are called "Married Focolarini" and form the backbone of a vast Movement within the Movement, called the New Family Movement.

THE VOLUNTEERS AND THE NEW HUMANITY MOVEMENT

The Volunteers, also called the "Volunteers of God," are a large group within the Focolare Movement; they would like to transform all human realities according to the Gospel spirit. The Volunteers are the backbone of the mass movement called New Humanity. The aim of this Movement is to help form a society made of men and women who are made "new" by the Gospel message and who can then bring new life to all fields of human activity (education, business, etc.). This results in new social relationships which, in turn, lead to the realization of new structures of society.

GEN

The new generations of the Focolare Movement form another Movement or, better, three movements: the Gen 2, the Gen 3 and the Gen 4 Movements, divided according to their various age groups. "Gen" stands for new generation. The Gen have committed themselves to living the Gospel message of love and to sharing with other youth the conviction they have that the Gospel is the answer to every question and the motive for everything they do.

THE MOVEMENT AMONG THE RELIGIOUS

Men and women religious — although they live according to their own rules and constitutions and are already a distinct part of the Church through their religious families — can also be associated with the Focolare.

Contact with the Movement helps them to focus their attention on the specific charism of their founders, and to see how it can be lived in the present time.

PRIESTS — PRIESTS' MOVEMENT —SEMINARIANS — PARISH MOVEMENT

Many diocesan priests are committed to living the spirituality of the Focolare Movement. Some of them live in community. They form the backbone of the Priests' Movement which is made up of priests who live the spirituality of unity.

FOCOLARE FAMILY

The largest group within the Focolare Movement is made up of men, women and young people who are connected with the Movement without having any formal ties with it. Their bond of unity stems from their acceptance of its spirit and their desire to live it.

ECUMENISM

The Movement not only crossed the political boundaries of more than 100 countries, it has also gone beyond the barriers erected for centuries between the various Christian Churches.

Ecumenical activities take place in the different parts of the world where the Movement exists.

In the past few years a promising, ongoing dialogue has been established with faithful of other religions.

SUMMER MARIAPOLIS

Summer meetings are held every year for those interested in the Movement and for those who wish to come into contact with it. For one week persons of all ages and walks of life are exposed to the spirituality of unity. Above all, they strive to practice it by creating among themselves a rapport that molds them into a community. It is intended to be a basic experience of such intense unity that the people will be able to bring it back into their own environments. And this is the most striking fruit of these conventions. They tend to be models of a world which lives according the Gospel.

PERMANENT MARIAPOLIS

The need to prolong the experience of the summer meetings brought about the birth of small cities called Permanent Mariapolis. They are made up of young men and women, as well as whole families, who are there for a designated period of time to be formed according to the Gospel spirit of unity.

They also attend classes in Sacred Scripture, Theology and Sociology and work for their own support.

MARIAPOLIS CENTERS

In addition to the Permanent Mariapolis, there are Mariapolis Centers, which are training centers for the members of the Movement.

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